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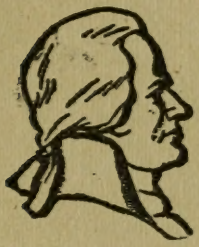
[Modern business Talks]

GETTING AN ADVERTISING START

Advertising and printing go hand in hand. After the "big idea" of inspiration, come the details of type, arrangement and art work. The executive need not master the technic, but he should understand it.

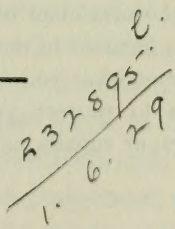


MODERN BUSINESS
TALK No. 12

ALEXANDER HAMILTON INSTITUTE
NEW YORK

Getting an Advertising Start

Number Twelve of a Series of Modern
Business Talks Prepared by the
Alexander Hamilton Institute



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NEW YORK

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READING ASSIGNMENT

The current Reading Assignment consists of three parts: (1) this Talk; (2) Chapter XII to the end of Volume 6, "Advertising Principles," and (3) Problem number 6.

One of the things that makes advertising so tremendously interesting as well as vital is the way in which you are able to manipulate the different elements, or see them manipulated under your very eyes, to procure desired effects. Every campaign is like working out a puzzle. Every piece of advertising copy, every booklet, folder, envelop stuffer, has its own little problem to solve. Every sentence is studied for its selling implications and words are chosen and moved this way and that to get the maximum of power out of them. When you read the incident in the Talk and fill in the details afterward from what you read in the Text, you will be in a position to protect yourself from serious advertising blunders, or equally expensive skepticism on the subject.

Getting an Advertising Start

One of our Civil War campaigners—Forrest the raider, possibly—summed up the art of war as "getting there fustest with the mostest men." With a little tinkering, the phrase gives the strategy of advertising in a nutshell. For "men" substitute "ideas," and include their repetition, also. As to "getting there fustest," that is to say, ahead of competition, the definition fits advertising like a glove. It is true of the roaring big magazine drive, and equally true of the rapid little surprise attacks which pick out weak spots here and there in the trade and competitive lines and overwhelm them in succession.

Most advertising naturally begins with experience of the latter kind. Such a campaign is the only kind in which the beginner has much of a show, or which may be expected to pay as it goes. To assure this happy outcome he must be prepared to dabble with much detail which the seasoned advertiser is able to delegate to his advertising department and advertising agents. The beginner must learn at least enough about the preparation of advertisements and advertising literature to measure his judgment against that of those who may presume to advise him, to know whom he can trust, and how far. He may forget the minutiæ as soon as he outgrows the need for close contact with them, but the knowledge will generally be found worth many times the effort it takes to acquire it.

Penetrating Advertising Mysteries

The previous reading assignment analyzed the advertisement according to its type and purpose. The current assignment considers its physical parts and also those of booklets, catalogs and folders. We are told about "layouts," type and illustrations. Trade names, trade-marks and slogans come in for attention and we get an inkling as to why some of the famous names have a good-will value of a million dollars a letter.

The Text's sufficient description of these matters leaves to the Talk the no less interesting task of showing them at work. The following series of incidents is the experience, slightly disguised for obvious reasons, of a well-known national advertiser. It illustrates the way in which the need for advertising sometimes becomes apparent and, when it does, the methods in which the various advertising elements before mentioned are brought into use and combined in one order or another to meet it. The incidents come under the head of surprise attacks. They furnish an interesting background or introduction to the technic involved, but they should not be allowed to overshadow in the reader's mind the technic's greater practical importance.

A Problem in Ivory

For more than twenty years the name of the M. H. Hardwick Company had been synonymous, in the "trade," with ivory. The company manufactured

everything from knife handles to billiard balls, and from piano keys to toilet sets. The goods were not trade-marked and the public did not know the house as the manufacturer of them. That was a drawback, but a seemingly small one in view of the fact that the business had grown to its considerable proportions without having had the help or protection of the consumers' good-will. It was as large, the founder said with some pride, as it probably ever would or could grow to be because of the limitation in the world's supply of raw material. It was conducted on the soundest and most conservative lines.

"After I am gone, you can do as you like with it," he had told his son, on the latter's return from college. "I've no doubt you will catch all the business 'isms,' but don't look to me now for cooperation. 'You can't teach an old dog new tricks.' Why try, when the old tricks pay so well?"

When this story begins, young Hardwick had been connected with the business for some time. He had worked up thru the factory and the sales department, and, as secretary of the company, was relieving his father of the more onerous details of management. Long before that, however, he had outgrown the elder man's viewpoint.

No Great Future for the Line

In the first place, there was the line's lack of future, already indicated. What use to him was a business and scientific education unless he could do

something worth while with it? And here was ivory growing scarcer every day. Any much greater demand would put it entirely beyond the reach of the only class of consumers that could support a really big industry.

"We can't 'stand pat,'" he insisted to his father. "See how hard it is for our specialty salesmen to get interviews and show the goods. The jewelers and department stores don't see anything ahead for ivory, they're not interested in it and won't push it, as they do silverware and these ivory substitutes."

"My boy, you listen too much to the advertising men," said the elder Hardwick. "We have a fine high-class business, limited, but solid. Be content with it and if unfortunately it will not stand any more capital investment, why, put your profits into something else, as I do."

As it happened, young Hardwick was doing that very thing without having told his father anything about it. He had perfected a superior imitation of ivory, and having fitted up a diminutive factory in an adjoining city to produce a line of near-ivory toilet articles, he was conducting a small mail-order campaign in the magazines to sell them thru agents.

A mail-order friend laughed, however, when young Hardwick went to him for advice. "It will never amount to anything by mail," he said. "Why don't you put it in with your ivory line? It needs retail pushing. Make your father see it."

His friend's words set Hardwick thinking harder. Why not sound the salesmen on it? When he did so

the reports were so good that he called in an advertising agent to talk it over.

Advertising Agent Makes a Suggestion

"Do you mind a suggestion?" asked the solicitor. "No? All right. Suppose you present the idea to your father in a less revolutionary form. For instance, you tell me you have a little sales problem in the toilet article department. Your specialty salesmen are finding it hard to get in to the dealers, they have no novel talking points."

"Right."

"Now, suppose, in conversation with your father, you wondered if it wouldn't be a good thing to 'sweeten' the trade with a novelty—something with more profit than you can give them on the regular line. You talk that over with your father. Nothing comes of it, possibly. Then you think you might furnish the novelty out of your near-ivory trade-marked line—what do you call it?—yes, Yvoroy. That's an unusually good name, by the way. There's a foreign flavor to it. The 'roy' gives a suggestion of royal. It's short, easy to pronounce and easy to remember. That will help amazingly, may even save thousands of dollars' worth of sales effort. Well, you can give the dealers a good margin of profit on Yvoroy in a holiday or gift proposition this fall. I say a holiday proposition, because I believe that is the only safe and sound way to float it without experimenting at possibly high cost. Many people will buy it as a novelty to give away who will not buy it for their

own use at first. The salesmen might talk it during the year, but I would push it only in the fall. Well, your salesmen would go in (you tell your father), and boost the new line and incidentally your old ivory. It won't make much difference whether they take many orders on Yvoroy or not. The main idea is to get Mr. Salesman into Mr. Merchant's back office and give him a chance to talk 'Hardwick Ivory.' As a sales scheme, that might appeal to your father."

"It sounds good to me."

Dealer Broadsides as a Foundation

"Of course, the first thing to do after settling on your Yvoroy novelties is to get up a series of three or four 'broadsides'—big folders—in two colors, to mail out to the dealers, playing up strong the big profits in it for them. You will want pictures and strong headlines. We'll send these folders out to, say, 2,500 dealers. They'll make the doors fly open. I know it, because I've done it twenty times before. Of course, you'll want a slogan. And you'll want to start building good-will from the beginning by playing up the trade-mark more prominently. The whole cost of the mailing—paper, printing and postage—won't come to more than $200 or $250."

"We'll get them up, anyway, and see how they take with my father," said Hardwick.

Before that could be done, however, several other things had to be settled, including the selection of the line of Yvoroy novelties, their new trade-marking and pricing to the trade and the public. There was

the slogan, too. Hundreds of them were suggested and brooded over before one was fixed upon that seemed to cover both the real and imitation ivory: "the beauty that grows with age." After that came the inevitable questions of policy—what attitude to take toward the trade, what attitude toward competition, just how far to play up the imitation ivory in the beginning, how to reconcile sales aggressiveness with the house's traditional dignity, and other like matters. The advertising agency copywriter made half a dozen trips to the Hardwick factory, and had as many conferences with the secretary before they had all the wrinkles ironed out.

Putting It Up to the Head of the House

Hardwick looked over the finished work with interest. It had cost him a pretty penny, but it was worth it to be able to lay it before his father in that shape. "It ought to touch the old boy's pride," he said. Nevertheless, out of caution, he put the big folders "on ice" for a week and did not take them in to his father until he was thoroly satisfied with them. Then, without a word of explanation he dropped them on his father's desk.

The head of the house ran an amazed eye over the outside of the first broadside, opened it up to its full size, which was half the width of the desk, looked up at his son, and then, beginning with the first line, read it slowly and carefully thru to the end. Then he picked up the second and read that, and lastly the third.

"How far have you gone with this?" he asked, at length.

"It's a sales device I have under consideration to help the men. They are strong for it, and the dealers, too, that know about it."

"And this line of imitation ivory—which I have always detested—this Yvoroy, where did you propose to get that?"

Young Hardwick told him the story.

The head of a successful business may have a strong preference for his own ways, but he is seldom an old fogy. Hardwick, Senior, had no sooner seen the plan on paper than he had grasped its possibilities. He would not commit himself, but took it under advisement and in the course of a week gave his assent.

Complete success attended the try-out. The dealers read the three broadsides mailed out to them at ten-day intervals and were impressed by the unusual display of energy on the part of a respectable old house and by the generous profits allowed on the new goods. They readily consented, when the Hardwick salesmen came around, to stock the Yvoroy sets, and, in addition, they bought more real ivory than ever before.

New Broadsides Backbone of Next Year's Drive

The following fall the experiment was repeated in a different and advanced form on more dealers. The Yvoroy was tinted in various colors; some of it was flecked with gilt. As before, it was a distinct novelty,

without competition, and, therefore, able to continue the unusual profit for the dealers. The latter were posted by a new and striking series of folders in color, with illustrations and sales suggestions. They were, as in the previous year and as in the advertising campaigns of many other houses, the backbone of the drive. Many dealers ordered immediately by mail. The Hardwick salesmen had no difficulty in doing business with the rest. The same success followed as during the Christmas holidays of the previous year; there were clean-up sales of both Yvoroy and ivory.

Best of all, the head of the house was now interested.

"Now is the time to clinch it!" Hardwick, Junior, told the advertising agent. "Haven't you something big in your bag of tricks?"

"Anything you say," answered the agent. "But I don't think it is time yet to quit the holiday proposition. We might venture on a little advertising, say four inches for three months in two or three women's magazines, a little flyer in the trade papers, and broadsides as before. We shall need some kind of a peg to hang it on, some kind of free offer to barb the hook. Talking quality, distinction of design and all that is slow work; it doesn't interest. What we want to do is to spring an idea and stampede 'em. Something that will work into the dealer literature and the sales talk, too, and make it *easy* to think about the Hardwick line."

"How about a paper knife, calendar or blotter?"

"I have a better hunch," declared the agent. "When I was in Chicago last week I dropped in at the Art Institute. There are a lot of ivories there that would be very attractive to a woman. Take those little Buddhas; any woman would 'just love' to have one on her library table, especially if she could get it for nothing. Or better still—I have it:—one of those Japanese *netsukes,* those quaint little figures or groups a couple of inches high the Japs use as buttons to keep their tobacco boxes and writing paraphernalia from slipping out of their sashes. They are novel and artistic and all that."

"I've seen them," said Hardwick. "They're very amusing."

"You could pick out one that will reproduce well from a mold and get a wax impression of it. Reproduction in Yvoroy might cost you five or six cents apiece; it would cost two cents more to mail, unless you distributed it thru the dealers. I would not advise that course because at the start you will want to keep in close touch with all details. That's, say, eight cents at the outside, or $1,600 for 20,000 pieces. The advertising will add $1,000. Three thousand dollars will cover everything. It ought to pay handsomely and leave a nice little bunch of good-will for next year. It certainly would work up splendidly in the broadsides, and help the salesmen."

"You'd offer these — what do you call them?— *netsukes* in the advertising, would you?"

"I'd feature the Yvoroy sets and take a look at Hardwick ivory and then I'd sandwich in two or three glowing lines about the *netsukes* and offer them free to ladies who send in also the names of their jewelers or department stores. When they do that you write them and mail the *netsuke,* and turn their letters over to your salesmen to show the dealers."

"Great!"

"After you've selected the *netsuke* I will have one of our men get some Japanese dope for the folders. We'll prime the dealers and their clerks so that the campaign will go thru with bells on."

Broadsides Start the Drive

Everything worked out according to program. The *netsuke* was quaint and artistic. The dealer broadsides described and pictured it, outlined the coming campaign and told how the house of Hardwick was planning to send business into the stores. This laid the foundation for the drive. Then the Hardwick salesmen went out and polished it up. Later, after the magazine advertising had begun to run and inquiries were coming in, the salesmen repeated many calls with portfolios full of letters and persuaded dealers to increase their orders for both lines and push them.

One of the surprises was that many women to whom *netsukes* were sent wrote cordial letters of appreciation. Some said they had gone down town immediately and bought Hardwick products. With these letters in hand the salesmen worked wonders.

The final results, in fact, exceeded all expectations. Instead of the 20,000 figured on, more than 30,000 *netsukes* were distributed to readers of the advertisements, and the business in ivory and Yvoroy was correspondingly stimulated.

"Now you've got them on the run," said the advertising agent, "the thing to do is to pile on the agency. Keep the dealer sold! He's the key to the public. I'd have another novelty next fall, and this time distribute it thru the dealer; that will please him. Then let's rig up a scheme to capture the inquirer after she comes to the store to get the ornament, and capture the others, too, who haven't seen the advertising. Let's have a display of both ivory and Yvoroy in the stores. Offer a handsome descriptive booklet to any lady who will tell the difference between the two products. Of course, they can do it, but they'll have to look close. They'll take the articles up in their hands and compare them. And that is what you want! Now you have their attention and interest. The booklet will turn it to desire and resolve to buy. You see what I'm after. I want to dramatize the proposition so as to get human interest into it and give you something to talk about in the ads and mailing pieces. This is an old plan with me and it always produces."

New Ammunition for the Advertising

It did in this case. As before, the campaign was thoughtfully laid out. It was organized around an Yvoroy Buddha paper weight, four inches tall, and

copied from a famous statue. It cost twenty cents to manufacture in quantity. It would ordinarily have retailed at 75 cents, but the advertising agent suggested that the company let the dealers have it at cost or less so as to sell again at 25 cents to whoever read the Hardwick advertising and presented the advertising coupons.

The advertisements and folders were prepared with this in view. The salesmen followed the folders out and stocked the trade. Then the advertisements appeared, half and quarter pages in four or five women's publications, and shooed the ladies into the shops, where everything worked according to schedule.

The most notable result was the demonstration of strength in the demand for the ivory substitute. Ivory products sold splendidly, but Yvoroy ten times better than before.

This was too plain an indication to be ignored. The next year's advertising, still further enlarged and extended to take in the Easter holidays, featured Yvoroy almost exclusively. The results proved the wisdom of this plan. The company manifestly faced a future of great possibilities.

The outbreak of war postponed the next campaign. The company could make no aggressive bid for business, tho on a smaller scale it continued its advertising, confining itself to "molding" public opinion on ivory and Yvoroy, and patriotically devoting a part of its space to the advertising of Liberty Bonds, the Red Cross and the different war drives.

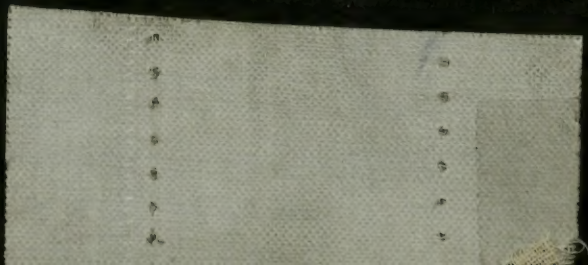
Most of the business gains of the previous years

were held during the lean war period, and the company was ready for more active measures in 1919, as soon as it was evident how matters were turning.

Typical of Many Other Campaigns

Hundreds and thousands of products have been edged into prosperity by methods similar at bottom to those employed in advertising and marketing Yvoroy. There is, first, the study of the public's wants, the trade's wants and the product itself; the study also as to how these are to be matched up and introduced to each other in some more or less dramatic and interest-compelling way. To be successful, that must be the work of some one who has a keen insight into human nature; better still, sympathy with it. Then there is the use of business knowledge and sense to guide the campaign along the lines of proved practicality and make the returns from it exceed the expenses. And, last but not least, there is the use of "printers' ink," without which neither social sympathy nor business sense would be effective, which you positively must have in some form or other, in order to get your "mostest" ideas there "fustest" and make certain of their success.

The Text assignment deals with advertising technic, but aims to exhaust neither the subject nor the reader. Its purpose is to present the irreducible minimum of advertising facts and principles that men should know to make them all-round business men of broad views and sound judgment.



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